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The UNECE/WHO-EURO Protocol on Water and Health and Integrated Water Resources Management

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IWRM and the Protocol – what are they ?

IWRM - *process of promoting the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.*

The Protocol on Water and Health - *the world's first international treaty in force designed to reduce water-related deaths and diseases through improved water management and universal access to safe water and adequate sanitation,*

The principles:

Protocol's (Article 5):

- Water resources managed in an integrated manner linking economic and social development with protection of natural ecosystems
- The precautionary principle, preventive actions to avoid outbreaks of WRDs
- The polluter pays principle
- Intergenerational equity
- Due account to local problems, needs and knowledge
- Access to information and public participation
- Equitable access to water, particular attention to vulnerable groups

IRWM

- Water should be treated as an economic, social and environmental good;
- Water policies should focus on both the management of water (demand) and the provision of water (supply);
- Government regulatory frameworks are critical in fostering the sustainable development of water resources;
- Water resources should be managed at the lowest appropriate level (i.e., in communities and villages as opposed to in capitals); and
- Women should be recognized for and supported in the central role they play in the provision, management and safeguarding of water

Challenges and obstacles for implementation

- Still sectorial approach to management of water and land resources;
- Weak communication between water/land managers and health workers; so far: lack of trust, finances, often lack of political commitment;
- Awareness of the linkages between the environment/water and health is still low;
- Sanitation often seen as a technical problem and not always as a part of IWRM;
- Health issues hardly addressed in IWRM.

Why treaty to manage water resources and prevent water-related diseases?

- In the European Region, poor-quality drinking-water causes over 13 000 deaths from diarrhoea among children aged 0–14 years (5.3% of all deaths in this age group) each year
- 140 million (16%) do not have a household connection to a drinking-water supply
- 170,000 cases of water related disease reported in 2006
- In central and eastern Europe water is safe only in 30—40% of households
- 85 million (10%) do not have improved sanitation
- Emerging threats: health problems related to the increasingly complex chemical environment and climate change

The Protocol and IWRM - what is the difference?

- Both recognize the role of natural ecosystems in maintaining water quality: mitigating the effect of nitrogen in groundwater on water supplies, the effects of pollution by hazardous substances and regulating the water quantity: e.g. mitigating the impact of floods

The Protocol:

- recognize water as a key determinant of both, ecosystems and human health - improving quality of water resources and creating sustainable drinking water supply => better health of the population
- focus is on protection of human health and the linkages between human health and the environment and equally stress the importance of the protection of both

The Protocol puts human being back into the frame of the natural environment

What is the difference (cont).?

- It is not a concept - it's a negotiated text
- More direct translation in national law
- Parties have very concrete obligations, designed to support continuous progress with pace and objectives tailored to national/local priorities and capacities
- Fosters the cross-sectoral cooperation (in particular for non-EU countries)
- Addresses issues which are not, or very vaguely, covered by EU: sanitation and water supply in remote areas, health aspects in EIA, surveillance of water related disease



Scope

**Costal and
estuarine
waters**



**Surface
waters**

**Water
during
abstraction,
transport,
treatment
and supply**



**Wastewater
collection,
transport,
treatment,
discharge,
reuse**

Aim: Protect human health and well being by better management of water resources



Water Management

- Effective protection of water related ecosystems and sustainable use of water resources
- Provision of adequate supplies of wholesome drinking water

Health Outcomes

- Prevention, control and reduction of water-related diseases
- Detection, contingency planning and response to outbreaks

Setting targets and reporting- the backbone for implementation

Art. 6: setting targets and target dates

Art. 7: review and assessment of progress collecting and evaluate data on indicators that are designed to show the progress made



Areas for setting targets, following Art. 6 of the Protocol



The current status:

- A leap forward since entry into force in 2005 (currently 24 Parties)
- Setting targets: 4 Parties - finished, 16 - ongoing process, 3 – planned (March 2008)
- Pilot reporting on national implementation is ongoing – the first summary report by the end of May
- All established bodies (3 Task Forces, Compliance Committee, WGWH) fully operating
- More rational and coordinated international assistance (ongoing projects under AHPFM)
- Join forces with other initiatives (EUWI) and actors (UN org, NGOs, private sector)

Conclusions

- The Protocol helps to: achieve the IRWM ↔ IWRM helps to achieve the objectives of the Protocol – mutual support;
- The Protocol should be seen in broader framework its flexible approach allows to: address social aspects such as minorities, human right to water, climate change, issues important for the country/region;
- Allows to analyze the national water and health situation, target the challenges and to focus the attention of decision makers to water and health related issues;
- Demonstrates the causal connection between quality of water in streams/rivers/lakes and tap water in cities and rural areas.

Thank you for your attention !

